

Kirkpatrick



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Mark A. Smith - Household Goods Transportation -
Transportation Method not Determined by Agency
File: B-228813
Date: September 14, 1988

DIGEST

1. The transportation of an employee's household goods was authorized by a method to be determined by the employing agency, either at the commuted rate or by a Government Bill of Lading. Before the agency determined the method, the employee transported the household goods in a rented truck, and is therefore limited to reimbursement of his actual out-of-pocket costs attributable to the transportation of the household goods.
2. Reimbursement of the out-of-pocket costs an employee incurred in transporting his household goods prior to the agency's determination of the method to be used may include a one-way trip rental of a truck. The reimbursement may not include any charge at a daily rate for a stopover en route, a gasoline charge unless it is shown that it was not included in the one-way trip rental, rental of a tow bar for towing the employee's privately owned automobile, nor insurance for the household goods because it was not necessarily a cost attributable to the transportation.
3. Mileage is allowable only for use of a privately owned vehicle in traveling to a new duty station. Consequently mileage is not payable for towing an automobile by a rental truck used to haul household goods.

DECISION

This decision limits Mr. Mark A. Smith, an employee of the Department of Energy, to his actual expenses attributable to

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transportation of his household goods, not to exceed reasonable and customary charges for their weight.^{1/}

Mr. Smith as a newly hired employee in a manpower shortage category was entitled to travel and transportation of his household goods between his former home in Little Rock, Arkansas, and his first duty station at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Before the Department of Energy had determined the method of shipping the household goods, he chose to transport them himself in a 14-foot rental truck, departing Little Rock at 8 p.m., December 22, 1986, and arriving at Knoxville, Tennessee, in the vicinity of Oak Ridge, at 10:30 p.m., December 26, 1986. He did not have the household goods weighed. En route he had a stopover at Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, between 11:15 p.m., December 22, and 9:45 a.m., December 26, 1986. In addition to transporting his household goods in the rental truck, he towed his private automobile.

Mr. Smith claimed \$339 for the rental truck, \$160 for a tow dolly to tow his car, \$50 for insurance for the household goods, \$16.50 for gas, and mileage in the amount of \$75.15. Although he had the truck 6 days and incurred a rental cost of \$339, the certifying officer considered that a 2-day rental was sufficient and allowed only \$113 for 2 days of hauling. The certifying officer prorated on a daily basis the truck rental excluding the stopover time at Walnut Ridge. The claim for mileage in the amount of \$75.15 initially was allowed since the agency was unaware that he had towed rather than driven the automobile.

The transportation of household goods was authorized by a method to be determined after the Department of Energy obtained from the General Services Administration a cost comparison between the two methods available--either shipment arranged by the government under a Government Bill of Lading or reimbursement under the commuted rate system based upon commercial rates for the weight of the goods transported. See 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-2(a). The Department of Energy had not made its determination before Mr. Smith had moved his household goods. Since the weight of the household goods had not been established, the decision to reimburse his reasonable and customary out-of-pocket costs attributable to the transportation of the household goods in the rental truck was correct. See John S. Phillips, 62 Comp. Gen. 375 (1983).

^{1/} Betty B. Hensley, Authorized Certifying Officer, Oak Ridge Operations, Department of Energy, requested this decision.

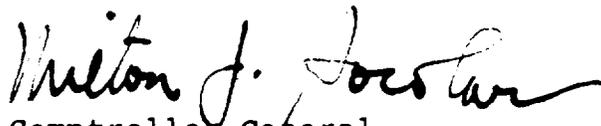
Concerning the truck rental, we understand that Mr. Smith arranged with the rental firm to pay a one-way trip charge without additional charges for the number of days used and gasoline consumed unless the maximum number of days and mileage specified in the rental agreement were exceeded. If the \$339 rental claimed does not include an amount for days in excess of the maximum number allowed in the rental agreement, it would be proper to reimburse the entire \$339. We agree that he should not be reimbursed any rental charges at a daily rate for days covering the 82-hour stopover at Walnut Ridge. Further, an additional amount should not be reimbursed for gasoline unless it is shown that the charge was not included in the one-way trip rental and that the gasoline was needed for transporting the household goods by direct route between Little Rock and Knoxville.

The costs of the truck rental and gasoline should be determined by the Department of Energy in accordance with the above discussion.

The certifying officer properly disallowed the cost of renting the tow dolly. It was used to tow Mr. Smith's private automobile, and the cost was not attributable to transportation of household goods. Automobiles are expressly excluded from the definition of "household goods" transported at government expense. See Federal Travel Regulations, para. 2-1.4h (Supp. 4, Aug. 23, 1982), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1986).

Insurance covering the household goods was also properly denied. Insurance is not necessarily considered a cost attributable to the transportation of household goods. We note that if a commercial carrier had shipped the household goods, insurance obtained by Mr. Smith above the regular transportation rate would not have been reimbursable. See Federal Travel Regulations, para. 2-8.4e(3).

The mileage previously paid should be recouped, since it was not an allowable item. Mileage is allowable only for use of a privately owned vehicle in traveling to the new duty station and is not payable when the vehicle is towed by a rented truck used to transport household goods. See Thomas R. Stover, B-224092, Mar. 23, 1987; Eldon E. Strine, B-183974, Nov. 14, 1975.

for 
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